

Stimulus dollars trickle to 61 bypass

Iowa DOT announces \$15 million coming to Fort Madison and \$41 million going to other ready-to-go projects.

The Hawk Eye

Iowa is wasting no time putting federal stimulus funds to work as Iowa Department of Transportation officials award the first construction projects using stimulus dollars.

Gov. Chet Culver announced the awards Friday.

Within three days of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act being signed into law, 19 highway and bridge projects totaling more than \$56 million are moving forward.

Four projects, totaling nearly \$15 million, were awarded to Lee County for work on the Fort Madison bypass.

* Grading work will be done on U.S. 61 from Iowa 2 northeast to Chalk Ridge Road, totaling \$8,245,240. It was awarded to PCI of Reinbeck;

* Grading and reinforced box culvert work will be done on U.S. 61 at Lee County roads J-40 and X-32, and between the two roads, totaling \$6,071,927. It was awarded to Steger Construction Inc. of Dyersville;

* Reinforced concrete box culvert work will be done just south of Bluff Road on U.S. 61, totaling \$299,530. It was awarded to Bloomfield Bridge and Culvert Inc. of Bloomfield; and

* Reinforced concrete box culvert work will be done just north of the Iowa 2 interchange on U.S. 61, totaling \$126,319. It was awarded to Iowa Bridge and Culvert of Washington.

The total cost of the bypass is expected to be \$100 million.

Work already is under way, as contractor Homer Tree Service of Lockport, Ill., is scheduled to begin clearing trees and removing stumps this week from the path of what will be a 9.5-mile half-loop that will carry traffic around town.

Bids for the 19 projects were opened on Tuesday, the day President Barack Obama signed the

\$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law.

The \$56.6 million awarded Friday is just a portion of the about \$358.2 million in federal stimulus funding appropriated to Iowa.

"By utilizing federal stimulus funding for these 'ready-to-go' projects, the Iowa DOT will be able to accelerate or add other highway projects to the state's five-year transportation improvement program, something that would not have been possible without the stimulus funding," Iowa DOT Director Nancy Richardson said in a release.

Work will begin on the projects as soon as weather conditions permit. This means hundreds of jobs for Iowa road builders and designers, increased demand for related supplies and services, and further economic development in Iowa around the improvements.

"The combination of federal stimulus funds along with my proposal to improve Iowa's infrastructure puts our state ahead of many places in the nation in being able to move our economy forward," Culver said in a release. "By helping businesses create good jobs, every aspect of our economy will benefit."